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ISSUED FOR BANJO, MANDOLIN AND GUITAR ENTHUSIASTS

No. 20. JUNE, JULY 1937.

MAKING ARRANGEMENTS FOR BANJO OR GUITAR.

By EMILE GRIMSHAW.

From time to time, I receive letters from guitarists and banjoists who want to know if they can be supplied with a book that will explain harmony as applied to fretted-instruments, or if I know of an instruction book that contains this information.

Although I devoted a few pages of "The Banjo and How to Play it" to explaining a very small part of this very big subject, it should be realised that a knowledge of Harmony is something quite distinct from that of learning to play a musical instrument, and it is not to be expected that we shall find it fully dealt with in any book that has for its object that of instructing enthusiasts how to play. The writing and arranging of music requires a sound knowledge of theory and harmony, and these subjects are in themselves big enough to fill many books.

All the books on harmony I have ever read have given all their explanations of chords and musical progressions through the medium of piano notation; which is as it should be. The two piano staves, treble and bass with the leger lines above and below, give all the notes at their natural pitch, and if the fretted-instrument player, who is, of course, already well acquainted with the notes on the treble staff, will give a few minutes thought to the notes as they are written for the piano on the bass staff, he will find that the examples as given for piano are clearer and more readily understood than they could possibly be if written for banjo or guitar.

A tonic chord in the key of C consists of the notes C E and G, and a Dominant seventh chord in the same key, is G B D and F, whether written for piano, banjo, guitar or any other musical instrument. Moreover, when a banjoist or guitarist understands these chords and their mental effect, he will soon find when he begins to put his knowledge to practical use, that he will not go far without a piano or knowledge of its written music. Almost all the arrangements he wants to make will probably already have been published for the piano, and he will soon find that the easy, methodical and correct way to adapt a composition for his own instrument, is to transcribe it from the printed piano part.

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Just one word of warning. It will be well to remember that there is a Law of Copyright in this country, with heavy penalties for infringement. It is illegal to make an arrangement of a copyright piece of music without the written consent of the copyright owner, just as it is illegal to duplicate by hand or by any other means, any portion of a copyright musical work.

* * * *

HOW TO FORM A SMALL BANJO, MANDOLIN OR GUITAR ENSEMBLE.

There are probably thousands of banjoists, mandolinists and guitarists who have never taken part in combination playing, and consequently do not realise how much real pleasure they are missing.

A large number of players is not required ; three, four or five with well-arranged parts are able to produce really fine results. The formation of a small club is not a costly undertaking, nor does it require months of serious study before satisfactory results can be obtained.

In very small combinations, no two instruments should play the same part. A banjo trio should use first, second and third parts ; a quartet should add the important bass-banjo, and a quintet should include a banjolin to occasionally double the melody an octave higher, and at other times play obbligato parts, such as are usually provided by the flute.

A mandolin ensemble should add the parts when increasing the number in this order : first mandolin, second mandolin, mandola, mandocello and a guitar for rhythmic accompaniment. An Hawaiian combination might use, in this order : first and second Hawaiian guitars, Spanish guitar accompaniment, ukulele and a mandolin to occasionally double the melody an octave higher, or supply florid melodic passages.

Now that the guitar is so immensely popular, players would find an added interest in their instruments if only they would give a little more thought to ensemble playing. A quintet of very capable guitarists appeared a short time ago before the public and gave a display of wasted opportunity by using only two different parts : three first and two second. Apart from the fact that this duplication of parts probably gave added confidence to the players, it is rather difficult to find a reason why five guitars should be used to interpret only two parts. If five guitars *must* be used, a far better effect could undoubtedly be obtained if, with the first and second parts the third guitarist played a counter-melody ; the fourth guitarist gave the whole of his attention to providing a correct bass part ; and the fifth guitarist occasionally doubled the melody, and at other times played florid parts in the higher positions. This means, of course, that one of the

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Being SOFT AND PLIABLE
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and CANNOT WARP THE NECK
of a banjo as do ordinary covered metal strings.
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players would have to know something of harmony, so that he could arrange the required parts, because no publisher could afford to issue them.

On the other hand, instead of using five instruments with similar voices, better and more interesting music would result by using first and second guitars, first and second mandolins and a guitar playing a mandola part. Mandolins and guitars blend together admirably, and the difference in tone colour between the two instruments would help to sustain the interest, particularly if one were allowed to play certain parts of the melody while the other was silent.

"Havana Moon" has parts for first and second guitars and first and second mandolins. Other pieces that are suitable for small combinations other than Hawaiian, are "Show Boat"; "Medley of Leslie Stuart's Songs"; "Operatic Memories"; "Vodka" and "Chop Suey." If players will write and mention the instruments they propose to use, a marked orchestral list will be sent post free to any address.

* * *

HAWAIIAN GUITAR BREVITIES.

Use reliable strings of the correct gauge.

Time correctly your left-hand stopping and right-hand picking in order to minimise much of the noise caused by faulty manipulation.

When placing the steel on the strings, the latter should be deadened by allowing the third left-hand finger immediately behind and a little below the steel to first make contact with the strings.

When raising the steel, the latter should always leave the strings before the left-hand finger that is used for deadening the strings behind the steel.

The two rules just mentioned will prevent that objectionable metallic twang with which most players of this instrument are familiar.

Another rule to prevent this unwanted twang, is to curl the third and fourth fingers under the steel when the latter is required to touch only one string.

Always vibrate the steel from a loose wrist—not from the elbow joint.

The vibrato should be used with discrimination, and should be regular and not too rapid.

Don't touch the strings with the finger picks until the actual moment when the strings have to be vibrated.

When picking the strings, the movement should be solely from the finger joints.

Contrasting tonal effects can be produced by picking the strings near the bridge or near the fingerboard.

Always endeavour to play expressively, and as much as possible with a guitar or piano accompaniment.

The E.G. Foot Rest

This useful device elevates the knee of the player; prevents the instrument slipping from its correct position and relieves foot tension.

The E.G. Foot rest is adjustable to various heights and folds flat when not in use.

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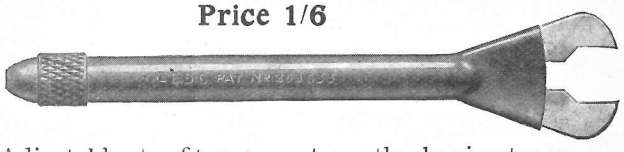

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Pull out the tape until the desired number is seen. The swinging box will indicate the correct tempo.

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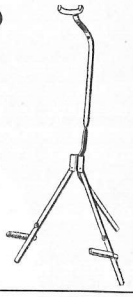

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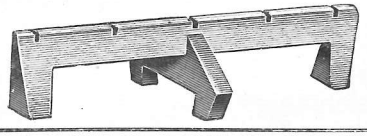

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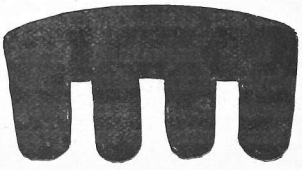

Bandsman J. WINTERBOTTOM (right)
of the BAND of H.M. 11th HUSSARS.
Shows his G4 REVELATION Guitar to a friend.

Bandsman J. Winterbottom writes :-

"I can candidly say I have never heard a guitar with the power that this one has, especially above the seventh fret, which proves a weak spot in most guitars. When played in the dance orchestra, the chords seem to leap from the instrument without any effort at all on the players part and it also cuts right through the band. I find your Revelation G.4 all that it professes to be, and am fully satisfied with the result of the money I have laid out."

* * *

CHOOSING A TEACHER.

The late T. P. O'Connor once wrote: —

"A person who is entirely self-taught, may go on improving from month to month and may make progress, but there is always the danger, nay, the certainty, that various errors will pass unnoticed, and even become engrained by the process of continual repetition."

The time when good personal lessons are most important is during the early stages of learning an instrument—before a young player has had time to acquire habitual wrong methods.

What a large number of plectrists there are, for example, who not only hold the plectrum wrongly, but who also use it wrongly on the strings of a wrongly held instrument! These important details together with the correct use of the fingers of the left hand should be understood by would-be players at the very beginning. Students should be taught how to tune correctly, how to read music easily, how to produce good tone and the countless other things that are essential for the making of a good player.

It is important, therefore, that the prospective player should choose his teacher wisely. The best teacher is not necessarily the one who has a first-class reputation as a player, but rather the one who

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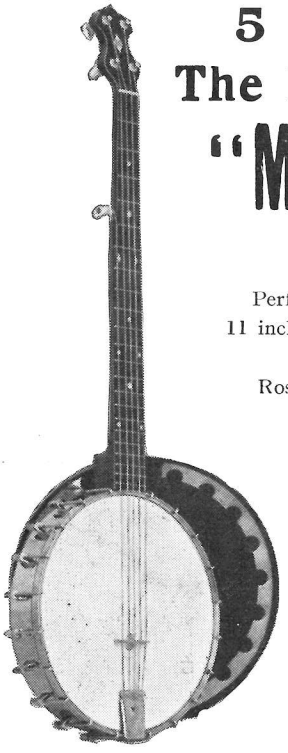

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has turned out pupils with first-class reputations as players. It is possible to be a great artist and at the same time be without the necessary ability to impart information to others; or the well-known artist may not have sufficient time, inclination or patience to instruct others.

A well-known guitarist frequently boasted that he was entirely self-taught. Another player who had become very tired of hearing this oft-repeated statement put an end to his boasting once and for all, by replying: "What a tremendous lot you must think of your teacher."

* * *

MUTE YOUR BANJO EFFECTIVELY.

If you are a banjoist and don't use a mute occasionally, why not? Perhaps you have experimented with one made from brass or steel, and found that the resultant tone has been metallic and unpleasant to the ear. Perhaps you found that the mute caused a tiresome jarring effect, or maybe you had a contrivance permanently attached to the instrument that muted the tone to a considerable extent when the mute was not in contact with the bridge.

If you have been discouraged in this way, you have not been using the right sort of mute. The best mute for fitting on a banjo bridge happens to be the simplest and the cheapest; it is non-metallic in tone because no metal is used in its construction; it does not fall off the bridge at an inopportune moment, because each one of the four separate feet is pliable and maintains a separate grip.

The tone produced from this mute is sweet and musical, similar to that of a softly played guitar. This E.G. Horn Mute is made specially for Emile Grimshaw & Son, who will send one or more to any player for 1/4 each post free, cash with order.

* * *

QUERIES ANSWERED.

Fretted-Instrument queries are requested and answered by return post if a stamped, addresssed envelope is enclosed. We give below a selection from the replies that have been sent to correspondents since "Pickings" was last issued, believing that they will be of interest to other players.

A.D.—When a guitar or banjo is held correctly, the instrument does not depend for support on the left hand which, strangely enough, is what the majority of beginners imagine. The instrument should be steadied by the right forearm in order to keep it at the correct angle, and should be almost independant of the right hand.

C.T.—No person can state what will be the approximate life of a banjo vellum, which may be for years or only a few days. It is certainly annoying for a keen player to have to wait a few days

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until a new one can be fixed. It is, however, possible to obviate this by keeping a ready stretched vellum on hand. Would it not be foolish to rely only upon the strings you are at present using on the instrument ?

C.B.A.—The three dimensions in music are: 1. Melody. 2. Harmony in its perpendicular form, or in other words, the notes of a single chord heard simultaneously. 3. Harmony considered horizontally: what is called counterpoint.

A composer will work out a tune in the order as given above. He first creates his melody; then his harmony; and finally, when writing a piano or other part, or arranging the melody for two, three or four voices, he will write other melodies against the original one.

B.W.A.—Some guitar six-note chords are quite difficult to finger and play in quick accompaniments. In such instances it is better to play four-note chords clearly than it is to play six-note chords and fumble them.

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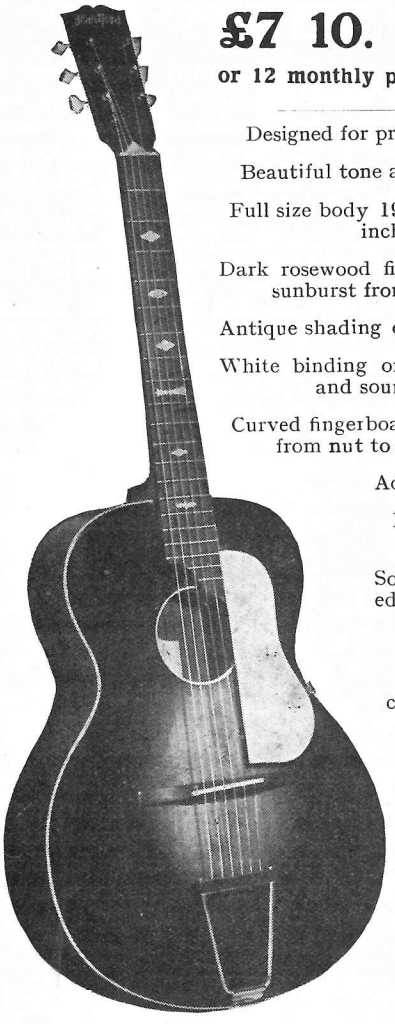

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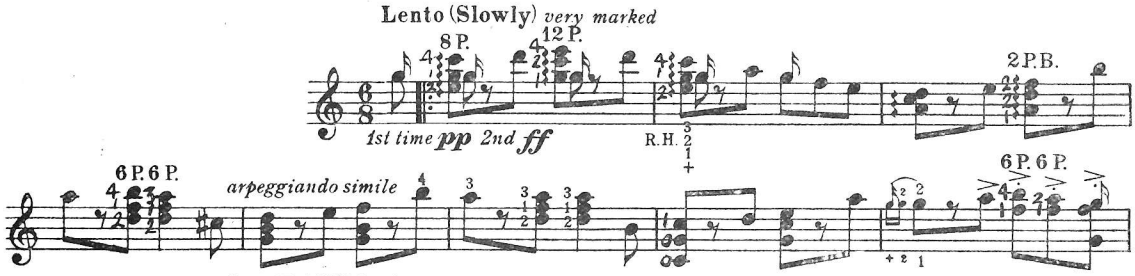

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